

Jason & Christina Pyke, Ontario

Pykeview Meadows, on Wolfe Island near Kingston, Ontario, is home to Jason and Christina Pyke's 550 acre bison and cash crop farm. From early childhood beginnings on dairy farms in Eastern Ontario, both Jason and Christina developed a love of agriculture. After graduating from the University of Guelph with Associate Diplomas in Agriculture in 1995, they became interested in bison, a hardy low-maintenance animal with very lean meat. In 1996, the Pykes purchased their first 30 head of bison and have increased the herd to its current size of 130 head. Markets for bison products weren't readily available so, the Pykes have grown markets for their meat and leather goods at both the Kingston and Ottawa Farmers Markets as well as health food stores, meat shops and restaurants. In 2009, an on-farm store has been added. Demand for their bison products has increased the number of animals they process each year from 10 in 2003 to 55 this year.

The farm was purchased from Jason's parents in 2001. With the help of Jason's father and brother, 1000 acres of soybeans, wheat and corn are grown using no-till cultivation. A GPS guidance system with auto-steer allows for more uniform application of herbicides, fertilizers and seed. The bison are rotationally grazed and supplemented with hay and haylage as needed. Their newest "crop" is wind energy. Four 2.3 mega-watt turbines will be located on their property through a lease to a wind farm developer.

Jason & Christina are both very involved in community and agricultural organizations that include the Ontario Bison Association, the Ottawa Rideau & Frontenac Soil and Crop Improvement Associations, and the Environmental Farm Plan Peer Review Committee. Happiness and freedom for Jason and Christina is making their own hours, commuting in work boots and having quality family time with their two young children, Jack and Chloe.